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Navajo Nation Council appropriates \$19 million for the Nation's 110 chapters, Navajo Veterans, and student employment

WINDOW ROCK – During a special session held on Friday, members of the Navajo Nation Council approved Legislation No. 0102-14, which originally sought \$5 million from the Navajo Nation's Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance to address local level community needs in the Nation's 110 chapters. Following the approval of five amendments, the overall amount approved by Council grew to \$19 million.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) explained that he worked with Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and his administration to develop the legislation in response to the growing needs of Navajo chapters.

"It's beneficial for the Navajo people when the President's Office and Council work together, and that's what occurred in this situation," stated Delegate Hale following Council's approval.

Council unanimously approved an amendment proposed by Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), which appropriated \$1 million from the UUFB, to assist Navajo veterans with emergency/medical expenses, home repairs, financial hardships, and scholarship/educational expenses.

In addition, Council approved an amendment proposed by Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake), which appropriated \$3 million from the UUFB for temporary summer employment for college and high school students.

Delegate Tsosie said he proposed the amendment after speaking with a Navajo mother, who explained that she wants her child — a student living off the Navajo Nation — to come home for the summer to continue learning the Navajo way of life, but is unable to do so due to the lack of student employment on the Navajo Nation.

Included with the amendment is a directive for all chapters and Local Governance Support Centers, to expend the funds by the fourth quarter of the current fiscal year, intended to expedite the hiring process for students.

On Friday, Council Delegate Katherine Benally (Chilchinbeto, Dennehotso, Kayenta) proposed increasing the original amount of \$5 million to \$15 million, emphasizing that chapters are in great

need of additional funding to meet the demanding needs of Navajo people. The amendment passed with a 10-5 vote.

Pending approval by President Shelly, \$15 million will be appropriated to address local level community needs, \$1 million for specific needs of Navajo veterans, and \$3 million for temporary summer employment for college and high school students.

President Shelly will have ten calendar days to consider the resolution once it is sent to the Office of the President and Vice President.

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